

AN
ANSWER

TO

Dr. *SHERLOCK*'s EXAMINATION

OF THE

Oxford Decree:

IN

A Letter from a Member of that University, to his Friend in *London*.

The Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged.

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A N S W E R

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Dr. *SHERLOCK*'s Examination, &c.

Jan. 3. 1698.

S I R,

AS to what you ask, concerning Dr. *Sherlock's Modest Examination of the Oxford Decree* (as he calls it:) I have seen it; and find He is very Angry, and under great Mistakes.

He is set forth in the Frontispice, with his Titles at large, *WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D.D. Dean of St. Paul's, Master of the Temple, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty*: And thinks much, that what he says (though without naming him) should be Censured, *considering his Profession, Character, and Station in the Church*, p. 2.

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The Title he gives it, (and at which he quarels) *Decretum Oxoniense*, or the *Oxford Decree*, is (for ought I know) a Title of his own. Sure, 'tis none of theirs who made it : who are therefore therein not concerned, whether it be, or be not, *Decretum Oxoniense*.

Nor was he Named in it ; but onely a Sermon censured, which was Preached at *Oxford* by another Person. If Dr. *Sherlock* be of the same mind with that other Person ; that is not our fault.

'Twas *Printed* (he says) *in Latin in these words, &c.* True ; but not with that spelling. For instance, *Prefectorum* was not printed (once and again) with a single *e*, instead of *Præfectorum* with an *æ*.

And it was hoped, so great a *Critick* as he would be thought (pag. 5.) might have been able to spell true, when he had a printed Copy before him.

He then fancies (or would be thought to think) that some *Malicious Animadverter* (p. 1. 5.) *had Translated this Latin into English, for the Benefit and Edification of his English Readers.*

But that is one of his great Mistakes. 'Twas printed at *Oxford*, both in *Latin* and *English*, the same Day ; and by the same Authority ;

thority; (and 'tis believ'd, Dr. *Sherlock* knows it was;) And the *English* (as there printed) is as much an Original as the *Latin*; (how it is Re-printed at *London*, I know not.)

And, I doubt, the Animadverter (if he had done it) would rather have said, It was for the *Benefit and Edification of Dr. Sherlock*, for fear he should not have understood *Latin*. For it is at this rate, they use to talk to one another.

If the Hawkers at *London*, have caused it to be *Re-printed*, with a new *Title*, and *Notes* upon it, (to make it sell the better,) and put it into the *Weekly Advertisements*, for that purpose; who can help it?

But the *Critick* finds fault with the *Latin*, as transgressing the plain Rules of Grammar, in using *Eorum fidei & curæ commissis*, for *sue*.

Of that, let the Criticks judge. If committed to *their* care, had been meant of *them* jointly, I think the word *sue* might have been used; but when to be understood of *them* Respectively, I think *eorum* doth better.

Sue curæ commissi, is, in plain English, committed to their own care: But it is here to be understood, of the care of others; and, who those others were, *eorum* was to signify.

And I would fain know, by what *plain Rule of Dr. Sherlock's Grammar* (if he have a *Grammar*) *Eorum* may not be so used.

But I would not advise Dr. *Sherlock* to venture too much at Criticism. I doubt his Talent doth not lie that way. In what cases we *must* use *sue*, and in what *eorum*, and in what we *may* indifferently use *either*; better Criticks, than Dr. *Sherlock* and I, will not take upon them to determine.

The pretended *false English* in that Remark (whose ever it be) *It may be Noted, that the Propositions above-mentioned are Dr. Sherlock's in his Discourse of the Trinity; and the Defender's of it* (of that Discourse;) *and wrote against by the Animadverter; I am yet to seek.* I think it is true *English*. When Dr. *Sherlock* tells us, where the bad *English* lies, let the Noter Answer it. The Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses are not therein concerned. Mean while, I think his two Criticisms, to be two Mistakes.

He tells us, *The Decree of the Oxford Convocation, is indeed Decretum Oxoniense, or a Decree of the University of Oxford, (Be it so;)* but, not that of *the Heads of Colleges and Halls*. Very true; Nor do they say it is.

But,

But, if that would do him a Kindness, a Vote of Convocation might have been had as easily. For, as I do not hear, that any one dissented, in the Meeting of Heads; so I believe there would have been as few in Convocation, if it had been proposed there.

Some perhaps would rather have had it passed, not there only, but *in Convocation also*; but, if so, it was to pass there first, before it came to Convocation.

But he says, p. 6. *The Statutes refer such Censures, not to the Meeting of Heads, but to the Vice-Chancellor, and six Heads, Doctors of Divinity, and to one or both of the Professors of Divinity.*

The word *Heads* in this last Clause, is another of his Mistakes. For it is not requisite, that *the six Doctors of Divinity* should all be *Heads of Houses*; the Vice-Chancellor may as well advise with other Doctors.

But be it so; there were at least *six Heads of Houses, Doctors of Divinity, and one or both of the two Professors of Divinity.* But is it there said, He may not advise with *more than six*? If instead of calling *six Heads*, he call them *All*, is there any hurt in this? Especially when they are all Unanimous?

But,

But, he says, *p. 3.* they were not all present. (Very good! Before we had too many, now we have too few.) But all were warned; and if some chanced to be out of Town, it is but what would have been in a Convocation.

Some of the Wisest Heads (he says) *were Absent, and some present Dissented.* That some were absent, is very like: But, that any present did Dissent, I have not heard; or, that any then absent did dislike the Sentence when they heard it.

But, if the Meeting of *the Heads of Houses be so Venerable an Authority*; he will (he says) *undertake, any day in the Year, to procure a Meeting of twice as many, as Wise and Learned Men, to censure their Decree.* (Very modestly spoken!) No doubt but he and his are *Wise and Learned Men*; at least, he thinks so.

But what are those *Wise and Learned Men* to do? *To censure their Decree.*

Very good! Perhaps they would (some of them, not many,) advise to put *sua* instead of *eorum*. But would those *Wise and Learned Men* say (as he doth) *That the three Persons in the Trinity, are three distinct Infinite Minds and Spirits, and three Individual Substances?*

I doubt,

I doubt, he would not find it so easy (*every day in the Year*) to procure a Meeting of *Twice so many Wise and Learned Men*, to say *This*. I do not find, that his New Doctrine doth make so many Profelites.

But, *supposing their Authority*, he asks, *How far their Authority extends?*

I say, if it extend so far as to censure our own Members; 'tis enough for our turn at present. Dr. *Sherlock*, if he please, may keep out of their reach.

And the words of the Statute be large enough, *Hæreticos, Schismaticos, & quoscunque alios minus recte de fide Catholica, & Doctrina vel Disciplina Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ sentientes. ----- Utque tam Conciones quam Libri, quibus male-sanæ opiniones propagantur, cohibeantur.*

And this referred (with Dr. *Sherlock's* good leave) *Vice-Cancellarii judicio, assidentibus ipsi Præfectis in ordinario ipsorum Conventu; (in the Chapter De Autoritate & Officio Vice-Cancellarii.)*

And, as to Sermons in particular, (in the Chapter *De Offensionis & Dissensionis materia in Concionibus evitanda,*) *Siquis pro Concione aliqua, intra Universitatem ejusve præcinctum habita, quicquam Doctrinæ vel Disciplinæ*

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nae Ecclesiae Anglicanae publice receptae dissonum aut contrarium-----protulerit ; sive protulisse ab ipso Vice-Cancellario suspectus, vel ab alio aliquo, rationabilem suspicionis causam afferente, delatus fuerit ; the Vice-Chancellor or his Deputy is to proceed as is there directed, Adhibito consilio sex aliorum S. Theol. Doctorum, quorum unus sit S. Theologiae Professor Regius, si concioni interfuerit.

But, because Dr. *Sherlock* (tho' he pretend to cite them) doth (p. 5.) *confess he doth not know our Statutes ;* I shall admit this excuse of *Ignorance* for his *Mistakes ;* Provided, he will forbear *thus to talk of he knows not what.*

Now, as to what the Vice-Chancellor is thus to censure ; it may be presum'd, that he (with the Advice afore-said) is (in some measure) to make some Judgement of it, in order to such Censure.

How far (out of the present case) they may *declare and decree Heresy,* I shall not take upon me to determine.

A Judge, in his Ordinary Proceedings, tho' I think he is not to declare *New Treasons* (besides those enumerated in the *Statute of Treasons ;*) yet, when a Case is to be tried before him, I suppose, he may declare, Whether he think the fact in question, to be
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Treason within that Statute. But, of this, let those judge, whose business it is to understand the Law.

I confess also, that I do not take *our Statutes*, to be the *Law of the Land*, (for the whole Nation ;) But they be *our Rule* (by which we are to proceed as to our own Members :) Ratified to us by the Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, under his Archiepiscopal Seal; and by the King's Majesty, under the great Seal of *England*.

The Statute of 1. *Eliz.* is, I suppose, to be understood of such *Legal Conviction* or *Definitive Sentence* (in order to Burning) as upon which (as the Law then stood) the Writ *De Heretico comburendo*, was of course to issue. Which is not the present Case.

That the Paper of Complaint was signed *but by Two*; I believe is true. But *One* had been enough. And the Vice-Chancellor was satisfied, there needed no more. And therefore did forbid the gathering of more Hands: Because he meant to proceed Calmly, not Tumultuously. (And, in so doing, I think he did wisely.) And it had been dispatched sooner; but that the Business of Entertaining the KING, did retard it till that Solemnity was over.

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But

But a main business of these Angry Papers, is, a Quarell between Dr. *Sherlock*, and, his *Malicious Animadverter*, Dr. *South*.

The Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses had said nothing of Dr. *Sherlock*; But had onely censured an offensive Sermon, which they could not approve of; but might be supposed to do, if (when Preached to their Faces) they shewed no dislike of it. But Dr. *Sherlock* (whose Doctrine was the same) brings himself into the Quarell by a side-wind.

He first supposeth, That the Complaint was commenced by Dr. *South*. Which is a mistake; for the Sermon was complain'd of, the same day it was Preached, or that following, before Dr. *South* knew any thing of it; being at that time far enough from *Oxford*.

Then, That the Person who Preached it, was never *summoned* or questioned for it, or *his Name mentioned at the Meeting*. Which is another mistake; for, upon the first complaint, the person was summoned, and did appear, and did give his Answer in writing, with his *Name* subscribed; owned the words; and said, what he had to say, in excuse thereof: and this his Answer was communicated to the Heads of Houses.

Next,

Next, That their Censure was in *Latin* only; whereas it was Originally in *English* also.

Then, That it was *Translated* by his *Malicious Animadverter*: when as there was no such matter.

That *He* caused it to be *Re-printed* at *London*; That, there, *He* gave it a *notable Title*; That *He* made the *notable Remarks* in the Postscript; That, *when He had Railed himself out of Breath*, *he called for a Decretum Oxoniense to help him*; which was the *wisest thing he could do*. That *Dr. South* solicited the Cause with such Zeal and Importunity, as could not be resisted; That *He triumphs in it*; That *He Published it in one of the weekly Prints*; and much more to the same purpose.

Now, if you ask, How he knows all this? His proof is, *It may be supposed*, or *It is easy to guess*, p. 5.

Now, much of this we know to be false. And if we should add, *It may be supposed*, that the rest is so too; would not this be as good a Proof?

Or, if it should be said, That *Dr. Sherlock* being Baffled by *Dr. South*, and having *Railed* to no purpose, got a Young man to Preach his Doctrine in the face of the University,

(*which happened, for his purpose, as if it had been contrived;*) that in case, as was hoped, the University had taken it patiently; he might have *gloried*, That the University of *Oxford* found no fault with his Doctrine. Which might *furnish him with new Topicks of Railing and Triumphing*: Would not, *It may be supposed*, do as well here? Only we cannot say, *It happened Luckily for his purpose*; but rather *Unluckily*.

But be this as it will: Let the Two Doctors agree that Point amongst themselves; or let the *Animadverter* and the *Defender* fight it out. The *Decree* (as he calls it) names neither; but only Censures a third Person.

That this Person *was not summoned*, is not true. Summoned he was; and had given in his Answer, in Writing, under his hand; and upon that Answer the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses did proceed. They did Condemn the Doctrine; and forbid the Preaching it; by him or any other.

Why they were so kind as to proceed no farther against him; many reasons may be alleged. He had (while the business was depending) quitted the University, and was gone; And, 'twas hoped (being a Young man) he would be more wary; and avoid the like, for the future.

And

And if Dr. *Sherlock* would, in time, have done the like, I think he had done better : and I believe the best of his Friends think so too. When he had let fall some unwary Expressions, and not justifiable ; he might have retracted them, with as little discredit as he has done some other. And *it would be the wisest thing he could do.*

What are *the thousand Jacobite Stories* he talks of (p. 1.) I know not : Whether now he *be* or *be not* a Jacobite ; Whether he *have* or *have not* been ; or, Whether *sometime* he *have* and *sometime* *have not* ; is nothing to this purpose ?

If he will still insist upon it, that *If a Person be a Mind, a Spirit, a Substance ; then three Persons must be Three distinct Minds, Spirits, and Substances*, p. 18. (*as distinct as Adam and Abel, though not separate*, p. 20.) he knows it will not be allow'd him : Because *Mind, Spirit, Substance*, are (in their proper signification) *Absolute* ; but *Person* (in its proper signification) is a *Relative Term*.

If Dr. *Sherlock* were Dean of *Pauls*, Dean of *Windsor*, and Dean of *Westminster* ; should we thence argue, That, since a *Dean* is a *Man*, an *Animal*, a *Substance* ; therefore, because of *three Distinct, Substantial Deaneries*, they
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be (or he is) *three distinct Men, three distinct Animals, and three distinct Substances?* I think not. Because *Man, Animal, Substance*, are terms *Absolute*, but *Dean* is *Relative*. And the same *Absolute Being*, may admit (without being multiplied) many *Relative Predicates*.

I should rather say, that Dr. *Sherlock* would (in such case) sustain *three Persons*, without being *three Men, three Animals, or three Substances*.

Yet this is not *Sabellianism*; For, though *Dean of Paul's*, be a *Relative Name*; yet it is not merely an *Empty Name*; but doth import a *Substantial Dignity*, as the *Ground* of that *Relation*; and a *Substantial Man* as the *Subject* of That, as well as of his *Other Relations*.

And this hath been told him so often, that we cannot think the *Dean* so Dull, as not to Apprehend the Distinction; but so wilful, as that he scorns to own it: But would still have us think, that *Mind, Spirit, Person*, are terms Equivalent; (and therefore jumbles them together as such;) which will not be admitted.

Or, if they be equivalent; why cannot he content himself with (what is generally receiv'd)

ceived) *three Persons*, but must impose upon us his New Terms of Three Distinct *Minds*, Three Distinct *Spirits*, and Three Distinct *Substances*? But Scorn and Flouncing will not carry it off.

The Consequence will hold more strongly, thus, If an *Infinite Eternal Mind or Spirit* be *God*; Then *Three Distinct* Infinite Eternal Minds or Spirits, are *Three Gods*. (For, here, the Terms are all *Absolute*, not *Relative*.) And if to maintain (*obstinately*) That there be *Three Gods*; (that is, *Three Eternal Infinite Minds or Spirits*;) be not *Heresy*, What is?

It seems to me, but a New Trick, to play the Game into the *Socinian's* hand; By granting to them (their darling Notion) that To affirm, *the Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost*, to be *Three Persons* of which *each is God*; is the same as to affirm that they are *Three Gods*. Which we must not allow.

If St. *Hilary* have sometime called them *tres substantias*; he may know, that *substantia* was at that time an ambiguous term, and taken sometimes as the *Latin* word for *Hypostasis*, and sometimes for *Ousia*. For which reason the *Latines* were, for some time, shy of admitting the term *Hypostasis*, least it should

should be thought to imply the same with *Substantia*, in the same sense with *Ousia*.

And he might have understood from his own Citation, p. 38. that, by *Substance*, is there meant *Subsistence*. *Tres Substantias esse dixerunt ; Subsistentium Personas, per Substantias, edocentes*. That is, (by his own Translation) *They said there were three Substances ; meaning thereby, three Subsisting Persons*.

But when as now (for some Ages) it is agreed (for prevention of Ambiguity) in the one sense, to say *Substance*, and in the other *Subsistence* ; it is not now the same to call them *three substances* (in contradistinction to three *subsistences*) as then it was, while the word was used Ambiguously in both senses.

This, I suppose, may satisfy you, (so far as concerns the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses ;) if it will not satisfy Dr. *Sherlock*, let Him and the Animadverter dispute it out.

Yours, &c.

